DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 171 089 EC 115 298

AUTHOR Batsche, Catherine
TITLE Barriers to Vocational Education of the Handicapped.
PUB DATE Apr 79
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention, The Council for Exceptional Children (57th, Dallas, Texas, April 22-27, 1979, Session TH-14)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Personnel; *Change Strategies; Committees; Demonstration Programs; *Handicapped Children; Individualized Programs; Information Dissemination; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Mainstreaming; Postsecondary Education; Secondary Education; Special Education Teachers; *State Programs; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS Illinois Occupa Programs Handicapped Students

ABSTRACT

The Illinois Network of Exemplary Occupational Education Programs for Handicapped and Disadvantaged Students developed demonstration programs for the handicapped at six high schools, two vocational centers, and one community college. The Network was designed to demonstrate those practices which resulted in the provision of effective services to special needs vocational education students within the least restrictive environment. A major goal of the program was the collection, coordination, production, and dissemination of information throughout a statewide inservice approach. A number of barriers were encountered, among them, failure to carry out the requirements of the individualized educational plan, lack of inservice education programs, and communication barriers between vocational educators and special educators. Among the techniques used to weaken the barriers was formation of an Inservice Steering Committee (composed of a special educator, a vocational educator, an administrator, and other related support personnel) in each school district responsible for the planning and delivery of an inservice program representative of the views of each specialty area. (PHR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED171089

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

BARRIERS TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION OF THE HANDICAPPED

Catherine Batsche

A Paper Presented At The National
Council For Exceptional Children Convention
Dallas, Texas
April 26, 1979

The Illinois Network of Exemplary
Occupational Education Programs For
Handicapped and Disadvantaged Students

Turner Hall 202C
Illinois State University
Normal, Illinois 61761

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

CEC

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EC115298

BARRIERS TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION OF THE HANDICAPPED

Catherine (Cookie) Batsche

The theme of the April, 1979 issue of Exceptional Children journal was "The Yet To Be Served". One group of students identified whose special needs had "yet to be served" was the adolescent. Andrew Halpern suggested that the vocational opportunities for handicapped adolescents "have not been restricted by the limitations of disability, but rather by the limitations of professional imagination, commitment, and resources."[1] The experiences of this author during the past four years lead to a general concurrence with Halpern's statement and with his observation that the "barriers to employment of handicapped people lie mostly with inadequate instruction and restrictive societal attitudes."[2]

During the years 1975 to 1979, the State of Illinois made an extraordinary attempt to remove the barriers to the vocational education of the handicapped. A major example of the Illinois effort was the formation of the Illinois Network of Exemplary Occupational Education Programs For Handicapped and Disadvantaged Students. The Network consisted of the development of exemplary programs for the handicapped at six comprehensive high schools, two area vocational centers, and one community college. The purpose of the Network was the demonstration of those practices which resulted in the provision of effective services to special needs students within the least restrictive environment for vocational education. In addition to the local demonstration centers, a dissemination center was funded at Illinois State University. This project was designed to serve as the focal point for dissemination activities. A major goal of the project was the collection, coordination, production and dissemination of information through a statewide inservice approach.

At the conclusion of the demonstration phase of the project, the Network activities were considered to be highly successful. The effectiveness of the Network has been documented in the project's Final Report (which is available from the author upon request). The experience gained through the Network may be useful to other local education agencies attempting to meet the needs of the "not yet served" adolescent in vocational education. The purpose of this paper is to discuss some of the barriers identified by the Network staff and to describe the methods and techniques used to overcome these barriers.

Substantive Compliance

A major goal of the Network was the provision of cooperative services to handicapped students. Ideally, the vocational teacher and the necessary support personnel should work cooperatively to plan and implement the student's vocational program. The I.E.P. was designed to be the vehicle which would facilitate the cooperative instructional arrangements. Following initial shock and resistance, school districts seemed to become fairly comfortable with the procedures of the I.E.P. and soon reached a level of adequate compliance with the legislative requirements. Unfortunately, the procedural compliance did not necessarily result in the desired cooperative programming. Too often, the I.E.P. was simply another piece of paper that was filed in the desk drawer of the special education teacher. Vocational objectives included in the I.E.P. tended to be stated in general terms such as "the student will complete chapter 1 of the industrial arts text". The substantive compliance that was intended was hindered by several forces that were documented by Prehm and McDonald as follows:

1. Not everyone supports the right to education principle.
2. Attitudinal problems toward the handicapped are ever present.

3. Teacher associations are not always enthusiastic about mainstreaming and its implications.

4. Teachers are becoming vocal about the lack of adequate funding and resources needed to teach exceptional children and/or maintain mainstreaming programs.

5. Preservice and inservice training programs have not prepared regular or special educators for their emerging roles.

6. Support for many "special" programs is decreasing because of the accompanying problems and bureaucratic paper chase.[3]

These forces are legitimate concerns for those who wish to promote cooperative instructional arrangements between vocational educators and special educators. The concerns are complicated by the fact that the basic purposes and goals of vocational education are often misunderstood by special educators and vice versa. Substantive compliance is difficult to achieve when such communication problems exist among those who have the responsibility to carry out the requirements of the I.E.P.

Inservice Education

The lack of inservice education programs has been another barrier to the vocational education of the handicapped. What may have been even worse was the poor quality of many of the inservice activities that did exist. It often seemed ironic to educators that a presenter at an inservice workshop could stand in front of a room full of teachers and lecture to them as a group on the importance of individualized instruction when the content of the inservice was far from individualized. Also ironic was the fact that teachers were told in inservice to provide incentives to students to increase their motivation while little incentive was offered to the teacher to listen to the boring lecture that passed for inservice. Even more offensive was the promotion of a "team" approach by a person who was representative of only one perspective of the team--either special education or vocational education.

Cross Disciplinary Communication

The communication barrier between vocational educators and special educators has not yet received the attention it deserves. Vocational education and special education both have their particular language and their unique set of acronyms. The special educator is confronted with new terms such as C.W.T., S.W.E.P., W.E.C.E.P., D.E., D.O., YETDPA, AVC, HERO, I.C.E., etc. Even more confounding is the specialized language in each vocational skill area (particularly so to the female teacher who grew up in the era prior to the emphasis on non-traditional sex role occupations).

The vocational teacher has all of the special education terminology to master (with its concommitant acronyms) plus the new categorical descriptions of special needs students in the vocational education field e.g. displaced homemaker, limited-english speaking, academically disadvantaged, economically disadvantaged, gifted, gifted-handicapped, racial/ethic, sex equity, and now the "culturally disadvantaged gifted". It seems to be a matter of days before there will be a new category of students called the "average non-categorical", the "average apathetic", etc. All of this could be very humorous if it wasn't suggestive of another problem that has occurred--duplication of effort. The lack of cooperative planning and the difficulty in communication has resulted in a great deal of duplicative efforts by vocational educators and special educators alike.

Removal of the Barriers

The staff of the Illinois Network recognized these barriers to be counterproductive to the goals of special needs, vocational education. Through experience, training, and trial-and-error, techniques were found to weaken some of the barriers. The remainder of this paper will deal with the inservice methods and techniques found to be most useful by the staff.

Inservice

"Are teachers doing during the inservice what you want them to do after the inservice?" This question was utilized by one of the project directors (Tom Boldrey, Joliet, Illinois) as a criterion to plan and evaluate inservice activities. It was found that the application of this criterion to the "team approach" resulted in effective inservice programs. The basic idea was that in order for the Network to promote cooperative supportive services to students, cooperative services must also be utilized in every phase of the inservice program. Therefore, school districts were asked to identify an Inservice Steering Committee that consisted of a vocational educator, a special educator, an administrator, and other related support personnel (guidance counselor, reading specialist, media specialist, etc.). The Steering Committee was responsible for the planning and delivery of an inservice program that was representative of the views of each of the specialty areas. In many cases, this Steering Committee represented the school district at statewide conferences and workshops and later replicated the workshop activities for the entire staff.

Another technique found to increase the effectiveness of inservice was the use of the Needs Assessment survey. Teachers were surveyed to determine their needs as a group and their needs as individuals. A "Self Directed Needs Assessment" developed by Dr. L. Allen Phelps served as an excellent model for the assessment of "content" needs.[4] Following the compilation of the survey results, a variety of inservice experiences were planned to respond to the group and individualized needs.

A second assessment instrument was used to survey "incentive needs" of teachers. In some districts, the requirements of the union contract restricted the number of inservice meetings that could be held. In other districts, the class scheduling arrangements did not provide the opportunity for release time

for school-day inservice. Therefore, teachers were asked to identify the types of incentives they would like to have in order to participate in additional inservice activities. In many cases, incentive such as money, university credit, or refreshments at inservice sessions received top rankings from teaching staff. It was possible in many districts to utilize the inservice education fund (or the P.L. 94-142 inservice set aside) to offer teachers "mini-grants". The mini-grants were small amounts of money (ranging from $50.00 to $500.00) awarded to teachers for the development of materials, the adaptation of curriculum or equipment, or development of other related services that would facilitate special needs students in vocational programs.

It was also found that teachers responded positively to inservice programs that were activity oriented. Whenever possible, simulations were used to personalize inservice. A variety of simulations were successful in developing enthusiasm in the inservice participants. An "Action Plan" was developed at the completion of inservice sessions which included the identification of an activity the participant would implement and the procedures that would be used. A carbon copy of each Action Plan was kept by the inservice coordinator and follow-up phone calls were later made to "rekindle" the enthusiasm that had been demonstrated during the inservice session.

Vocational teachers responded positively to the concept that techniques for special needs students could be used to increase teaching effectiveness and efficiency with all students. This was particularly true with a series of activities designed to help teachers identify primary learning styles in themselves and in their students. Once learning styles had been identified, teaching techniques were discussed which matched teacher and student learning styles.

Films were found to be an invaluable inservice tool for the development of teacher attitudes favorable to working with handicapped students. A list

of unique films was compiled by the Network staff and is available from the author. The films were used to create a sensitivity and an awareness of the handicapped person. In general, the films which were positive and optimistic in tone were more effective than those which were melo-dramatic and sympathetic toward the handicap.

Teachers also responded favorably to inservice sessions which provided them with materials and resources. In order to avoid duplication of effort, several documents prepared by "experts in the field" were reprinted with permission. The following documents were particularly valuable:

Instructional Development For Special Needs Learners: An Inservice Resource Guide by Dr. L. Allen Phelps[5]

An Identification and Assessment System by Dr. Len Albright[6]

Occupational Cluster Guides developed through a funded project at Central Michigan University.[7]

Concluding Comments

It is impossible to describe in a paper of this length all of the details necessary to cover the activities of the Network adequately. It is hoped that the information contained in this paper will serve as a stimulus for further investigation and discussion. As can be seen, the techniques and methods are simple in nature and are not necessarily innovative. However, the application of these simple techniques to vocational education/special education has resulted in improved cooperative services to students. It is perhaps a small, but incremental step toward meeting more adequately the needs of the "not yet served" handicapped adolescent.

Catherine (Cookie) Batsche
Handicapped and Disadvantaged Project
Turner Hall 202C
Illinois State University
Normal, Illinois 61761

REFERENCES

[1]Andrew S. Halpern, "Adolescents and Young Adults", Exceptional Children, 45, 7, April, 1979.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Herbert J. Prehm and James E. McDonald, "The Yet To Be Served -- A Perspective", Exceptional Children, 45, 7, April, 1979.

[4]L. Allen Phelps, Instructional Development For Special Needs Learners: An Inservice Resource Guide.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Len Albright, John Fabac, and Rupert Evans. A System For The Identification, Assessment and Evaluation of the Special Needs Learner in Vocational Education.

[7]Reynolds, Lutz, Johnson, and Phelps. An Instructional Resource Guide to Enhance Cooperative Vocational Education/Special Education Teaching, Central Michigan University, 1973.